



The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act:

**Sponsored by Senator Dianne Feinstein
Signed into Law on November 13, 2000**



Dear Californian:

Lake Tahoe's pristine mountain beauty has drawn and amazed people for centuries. The Lake is one of the largest and deepest in the nation and is known for the crystal clarity of its water. The entire Lake Tahoe basin boasts some of the most spectacular scenery in the Sierra Nevada and is one of the most beloved and truly special places on earth.

The Lake and surrounding basin, however, are threatened by pollution and drought. If action is not taken, the Lake could lose its famed clarity and the surrounding forests could be destroyed by fire.

To restore the Lake Tahoe Basin, the federal government has joined with California and Nevada and the Tahoe community and has embarked on a 10 year, \$900 million clean-up effort. As part of this partnership, Congress approved the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act in 2000, which I sponsored along with Senators Richard Bryan, Harry Reid, and Barbara Boxer, authorizing \$300 million to be spent on restoration efforts.

I am pleased to report that in 2003 we established an ongoing source of funding for our Tahoe restoration efforts. Working with Senator John Ensign (R-NV) and Senator Reid, we approved a bipartisan plan to earmark proceeds from federal land sales in the Las Vegas area to fund the \$30 million annual federal contribution to the restoration project.

This funding represents a significant step toward cleaning up the basin. But we cannot do this alone. We need the support of the public, the business community and elected officials to help save the Lake. With your help and support, we can preserve this precious natural resource.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dianne Feinstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dianne" being more prominent.

Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator

The Lake

Lake Tahoe is in a state of environmental emergency.

The Lake's famed crystal-clear water has been muddied by erosion. In 1970, it was possible to see over 100 feet down into the Lake. Five years ago, it was only possible to see 69 feet down on a clear, calm day.



The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act authorizes \$300 million to stop hillside erosion and improve the Lake's clarity.

The good news is that the lake's clarity is improving. The Tahoe Research Group has reported an improved depth of 78 feet in

2002. However, there is still much more that needs to be done in the coming years. A combination of pollution and sedimentation continues to reduce the Lake's clarity.

The loss in clarity is caused by:

- Erosion from roads and forests
- Runoff
- Destruction of Wetlands
- Development in inappropriate areas
- Deposition of nutrients such as nitrogen

Efforts must continue over the next 5 years to ensure that Lake Tahoe retains its world-renowned clarity.

The Forest

But it is not just the Lake that is in trouble.

Insect infestation and drought have killed more than one-third of the trees in the Lake Tahoe Forest, making the forest vulnerable to fire.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, the Sierra Nevada Forests, including those around Lake Tahoe, represent some of the highest fire-risk areas in the country. And the likelihood of a severe fire grows each year.



This could permanently destroy the habitat of several already endangered species including the red fox, willow flycatcher, Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, and the yellow-legged frog.

And it would most certainly increase sedimentation into the Lake, further reducing its clarity.

The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act

To restore the Lake and surrounding forests, Senator Feinstein introduced the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act in 2000 along with the Senators Richard Bryan, Harry Reid, and Barbara Boxer.

This bill, which was signed into law on November 13, 2000, enables the Forest Service to plan significant new environmental restoration activities at Lake Tahoe and authorizes funds for this purpose.

Specifically, the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act:

- Designates federal lands in the Lake Tahoe Basin as a National Scenic Forest and Recreation Area.
- Requires the Forest Service to develop an annual priority list of environmental restoration projects, and authorizes \$200 million over 10 years for the Forest Service to implement these projects on federal lands. This list would include projects that will improve water quality, forest health, soil conservation, air quality, and fish and wildlife habitat around Lake Tahoe.

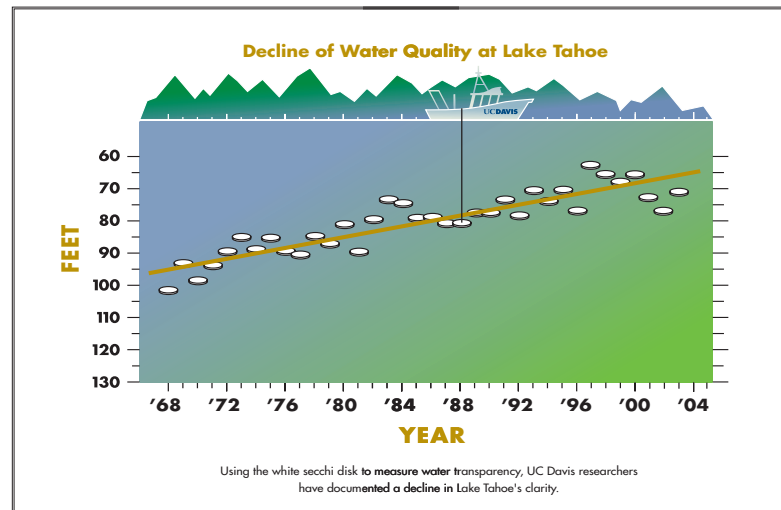
- Authorizes \$100 million over 10 years in payments to local governments for erosion control activities on non-federal lands. These payments will help local governments conduct soil conservation and erosion mitigation projects; restore wetlands and stream environment zones; and plant native vegetation to filter out sediment and debris.

In developing the environmental restoration priority list, the Forest Service is required to use the best available science, and consider projects that local governments, businesses, and environmental groups have targeted as top priorities. The Forest Service also must consult with local community leaders.

The act also requires the Forest Service to give special attention on its priority list to four key activities: acquisition of environmentally sensitive land from willing sellers; erosion and sediment control; fire risk reduction; and traffic and parking management, including promotion of public transportation.

Nothing in this act gives the Forest Service regulatory authority over private or non-federal land.

Lake Tahoe's Annual Quality Chart



Pollution and sedimentation have reduced the Lake's clarity by 30 feet in the past 27 years.

A Federal - State - Local Partnership

In addition to the funds authorized by the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act, State and local agencies, and private property owners have committed to fund efforts to improve the environmental quality of the region in a timely and cost effective manner.

Federal Government - Senators Feinstein, Ensign, and Reid secured ongoing funding (\$30 million a year) to fully fund the federal share of the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act.

California - Nevada Partnership

California and Nevada have pledged an additional \$357 million in the effort to save the Lake. Since 1997, California and Nevada have spent \$327 million to restore the region.



Local Government

Local governments are committed to raising \$101 million to restore the region, of which they have already spent \$48.9 million. They are currently engaged in a community wide discussion to determine the best way to generate the remainder of their commitment.

Property Owners

Private property owners have also committed to participate in restoration efforts. Through the permitting and the regulatory processes, private property owners will spend as much as \$150 million. Thus far, private property owners have spent \$50 million on restoration efforts.

After 5 years, we are more than halfway to reaching the \$900 million goal for full restoration of the Lake, with \$725 million committed.

Through this historic partnership, the Lake and the surrounding forests will be restored and the beauty of the region protected.

The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act is endorsed by the following local governments and organizations:

El Dorado County

Lake County

Douglass County

Placer County

South Lake Tahoe Public Utility District

Lake Tahoe Gaming Alliance

Lake Tahoe Transportation and Water Quality Coalition

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

Tahoe-Douglass Chamber of Commerce

Sierra Club

National Parks and Conservation Association

California League of Conservation Voters

Tahoe-Sierra Preservation Council

League to Save Lake Tahoe

For More Information

If you are interested in receiving further information about Lake Tahoe, please log on to Senator Feinstein's website (<http://feinstein.senate.gov>) and register to receive e-mail updates, or contact:

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photos courtesy J.T Ravizé & Linde Christiana Ravizé